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John Wingate Thornton.

J. Wingate Thornton

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MEMOIR

OF

JOHN WINGATE THORNTON, A.M., LL.B.

WITH

A List of his Publications.

BY
THOMAS C. AMORY.

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MEMOIR

OF

JOHN WINGATE THORNTON, A.M., LL.B.

MR. THORNTON was too well known over the land where any taste exists for historical literature, for his memory speedily to fade. His various publications are substantial monuments of his existence, and the ability and learning they display in the treatment of subjects of wide and permanent interest, must keep fresh the desire to know more of his life and character.

His manly and generous nature, his amiable disposition, his loyalty to obligation, compelled respect and inspired affection. He selected his friends with discrimination; but once taken into his heart, he never let them go. He cherished and gloried in their virtues, and would never acknowledge their faults, and the regard he entertained for them they duly reciprocated. His journals bear witness to his deep religious feelings, and his expressions of belief in a future life were strong and constant. He was a strenuous advocate of total abstinence, in which he was strengthened by the example and precepts of his father. Though often put to the proof in social intercourse, he strictly adhered without display to the rules which he had once conscientiously adopted. He never indeed courted observation, and was both too proud and disinterested to be ambitious. If aspirations for power or consequence ever acquired

ascendancy over a mind very evenly poised and well regulated, his dignity of character condescended to no selfish or sordid motive, to no elation or vain glory.

If as morally constituted, of marked individuality, his intellectual traits partook of the robust proportions of his physical structure. Both were alike suggestive of the oak in its rugged strength as well as in its symmetry and beauty; and like the lord of the forest he was peculiarly self-sustained and independent, as well in his processes of thought as in the conclusions which he formed from them. "His industry and energy were alike extraordinary, and he accepted little without investigation. He had his theories which he was fond of supporting, and was not averse to combating those of other men. He wielded a vigorous pen, and presented his views tersely and with excellent method, with directness and force. If occasionally in his discourses or writings the spirit of the advocate was displayed rather than of the judge, his ready command of his stores of information and love of controversy made him an effective debater, and his capacity and learning were conspicuous in all that he undertook." If we use phrases of one who knew him well, in thus delineating what constituted his mental mould, it would not be easy to find any more faithfully descriptive.

What especially entitled him to a distinguished place in these volumes, which contain numerous contributions of his own, was his thorough acquaintance with American history, and particularly with that of New England. They largely engrossed his attention and kept keen his thirst for information. He derived from them another title to consideration, inasmuch as his interest in these subjects grew originally in some measure out of the part his progenitors had taken in our early settlements, and in their subsequent development. His most remote ancestor of his own name on this side of the ocean, the Rev. Thomas Thornton, was not one of the pioneers. A nonconformist clergyman, driven away in 1663 from his native land by the intolerance that prevailed after the restoration of the Stuarts, for thirty years he was minister of Yarmouth in Massachusetts. When growing infirmities compelled his relinquishment of his pas-

toral charge, he betook himself to Boston to dwell, where his eldest son Timothy, born in England, had established a commercial house. Here death overtook him in his ninety-third year, as the new century opened. Greatly esteemed in the far-off times when he lived, his memory was revered and fondly cherished by his gr. gr. gr. gr.-grandson, the subject of our memoir, who often reminded his children that they were descended from one who suffered for conscience sake.

Ebenezer, 1690–1750, son of the merchant, was the father, by Elizabeth, daughter of Capt. Thomas Gilbert and second cousin of Gov. Belcher, of another Timothy born in 1727, whose wife was Eunice Brown, and who, as the vindication of our chartered rights culminated in armed resistance, civil war and revolution, removed with his family from Boston to Ipswich, where he died. His son, named Thomas Gilbert, after his great-grandfather, too young to take part in the war of independence, helped in 1786 to put down Shays's rebellion. Educated as a physician, Gov. Samuel Adams, in 1794, commissioned him as surgeon in the military force of the state, and he practised his profession many years at Saco in Maine. He was one of the founders of Thornton Academy in that place, and president of its bank. Exchanging his medical duties for commerce, he served several terms in the legislature, and contested without success his district for Congress. Jefferson in 1803 appointed him marshal of Maine, an office he held when he died in 1824. That he was a politician might be concluded from his official preferment, when party spirit ran high, and office already in a moderate degree the reward of political service. His contributions to republican journals were frequent and able. To his zeal in support of his republican faith, he owed, it is said, his acquaintance with Miss Sarah Cutts, his future wife, whom he married in 1793. Her father, Col. Thomas Cutts, belonged to a family then in many of its branches ardently attached to that side in politics. Its earlier rank in the history of the neighboring province of New Hampshire, of which John, son of William, member of Cromwell's parliament, was president, and in which his brothers Richard and Robert were otherwise distinguished, time had not impaired.

The eldest son of this marriage, James Brown Thornton, was educated at Berwick and Gorham Academies, and in 1809 entered Bowdoin College. Three years had not passed when hostilities commenced with England, and in June, 1812, he was captured in a Saco privateer by the Bream of ten guns, and carried into Halifax. After three months of hardship and privations, exchanged through the influence of his father the marshal, he returned home, all the more ready from his treatment to engage himself in the war. His uncle Richard Cutts, at that time a member of Congress, procured him a commission as midshipman, and he joined the Macedonian, then recently captured by Decatur. He was soon afterwards transferred to the United States frigate, one of a squadron under that officer, blockaded in the Thames till the war closed. When peace was declared he left the navy, and engaging in business at Saco, became interested in lands and shipping. Sagacious and eager to be useful, he drew attention to the water-power of the Saco for manufacturing purposes, and in process of time was one of the originators of the Portland, Saco and Portsmouth Railroad, connecting the commercial capital of Maine with the railroad system of the country. In 1817 he married Elizabeth, daughter of Judge Daniel Gookin, of New Hampshire, "a lady distinguished alike by the graces of literature, a rich poetic fancy, kindly affections and scriptural piety." Their son, John Wingate Thornton, eldest of a family of eight sons and three daughters, was born August 12, 1818, at Saco, at the house of his grandfather, Dr. Thornton.

Mr. Thornton's father, as we have already had occasion to mention, was one of the earliest advocates of temperance in a state whose name attaches to this great reform, and was himself its consistent example. He reaped his reward. His unusual stature, fine person and commanding presence denoted perfect health. His charities were extensive but unobtrusive, and he memorized the loss of two of his sons near the close of his life by large gifts to the Maine Missionary Society, in whose work he took a lively interest. The last twenty-five years of his life were passed on his estate at Oak Hill, in Scarboro' near Portland, overlooking the Atlantic from Saco Bay to Cape Eliza-

beth, with the White Mountain range in clear outline against the northwest sky. Whoever remembers him as his days came to be numbered, must retain a vivid impression of that grand old man, whose majestic mien would have awed but for the gracious and cordial warmth of his address. In this pleasant spot he died, Feb. 13, 1873, in his seventy-ninth year, in full possession of his faculties.

Wingate's mother had passed away while he was still a young man. But her memory was always fresh with him, and he spoke of her constantly to the last year of his life. He resembled her in many particulars, and an unusually strong affection existed between them. To her influence and interest in the work of his earlier years he owed much, and the deep religious feeling which influenced his whole life was doubtless awakened and nourished by her teaching and example. From her he inherited his intense thirst for knowledge, his exquisite delight in all forms of beauty, his singularly happy temperament, and sense of humor which was quick and keen.

She was descended from Major-Gen. Daniel Gookin, prominent in King Philip's war, of which he wrote an account, and who was an assistant from 1652 to 1686, the year before his death. The father of the General, another Daniel, son of John of Ripple Court in Kent, with his brother Sir Vincent, father of the author of the "Great Case of Transplantation discussed," 1655, settled in Ireland in the latter part of the reign of Elizabeth, or early in that of James the First. They both acquired by grant or purchase vast quantities of the estates confiscated by these rapacious monarchs. Daniel owned large tracts about Carrigaline in County Cork, and in Longford, what is now known as Edgeworth town. He removed subsequently to Virginia, near the mouth of the Potomac. His son Daniel, 1612–1687, the Major General, was driven away by the Indians and took refuge in Massachusetts. Nathaniel, the fifth son of this second Daniel, born 1656, H. C. 1675, died 1692, leaving by his wife Hannah Savage, Nathaniel, born 1687, H. C. 1702, who in 1710 married Dorothy, daughter of Rev. John Cotton, and died 1734. The grandfather of Mrs. Thornton, a third Nathaniel, 1713–1766, married Love Wingate; and their son Judge

Daniel, 1756–1831, an officer of merit in the war of American Independence, and Abigail Dearborn, were her parents.

Blessed with the "mercy of a good descent" from brave men and pious women, from Cutts, Gookin, Wingate, Cotton, Lake, Bradstreet, Downing, Winthrop, Savage, Hutchinson and a host of others with names almost as famous, whatever satisfaction flows from such honored ancestry was his. It was not tainted with pride, nor was he unmindful of how generally the same privilege was enjoyed by others, among whose numberless progenitors some must have been eminent. He did not affect to undervalue so great an advantage, either in their case or his own. Many traits of his moral and mental organization he recognized as heirlooms from these former generations. He had the more devout cause for gratitude, inasmuch as they directed his attention to historical pursuits, out of which proceeded many an enduring and precious monument of his industry, whilst they developed and matured his intellectual powers and supplied his existence with congenial occupation. He commemorated many of the families with whom he was connected by history or pedigree in the REGISTER or separate publications. One long cherished project was a memoir of his progenitor, Major-General Gookin, and for it he collected much material. It would have proved a rich field and grateful theme, embracing the Indian war of 1675, its causes and consequences, and what is known of the Indian tribes who directly or indirectly took part. Biographies garner up information even of greater interest than what is purely historical, and which for that period the lives of the Mathers, Dudleys and other personages as memorable will one day supply.

For historical researches his early training, which was not at either of the leading universities for general instruction, was a help, not a hindrance. It kept his range of investigation more within practicable limits. At Thornton Academy, endowed by his grandfather, he acquired the rudiments of a liberal and classical education, thorough so far as it went. He studied his profession, that of law, at Cambridge, when Story and Greenleaf and Sumner were professors or tutors, and improved other advantages which that cen-

tre of knowledge offers to all who have the good sense to improve them. Social, well connected and prepossessing, he was a welcome guest under many roofs, and kindly received in the presidential mansion by President Quincy. He formed there many acquaintances which afterwards ripened into life-long friendships. It is said that to one of his friends at Cambridge he owed the awakening of his taste for genealogical and historical pursuits, which if originally prompted by an interest to know more of his own progenitors, led to the far wider range they later assumed. After diligent study of his profession at the law school, he familiarized himself with its practice in the office of his uncle, John Fairfield, several times governor of Maine, and United States senator; and in 1840, having selected Boston as his future home, he was admitted at the age of twenty-two a member of the Suffolk bar.

After a short period in an office in State Street, Mr. Thornton occupied chambers, sometimes shared with another, up one flight in that heavy pile of dark granite erected by the ice-king, Mr. Frederick Tudor, opposite the court house, exchanged for the last two years of his life for offices more modern and commodious on Water and Devonshire Streets, near the post-office. Physically and intellectually he was well constituted for good rank at the law. His mind acute and philosophic, delighted to grapple with its subtleties as a science, to adapt its technicalities to the solution of the questions which grow out of the multifarious relations of a busy and wealthy community. Nor was his presence a disadvantage. While amiable and genial, his powerful frame, firm tread and rapid movements, a voice that commanded attention, indicated, as mentioned by one of his professional neighbors, a spirit not easily daunted, a confidence not readily abashed.

The Suffolk bar, when he commenced his professional career, was largely composed of able and eloquent lawyers, many of whom had already attained renown beyond the limits of the state. For the work to be done, it was overcrowded with aspirants, who could not all reasonably promise themselves distinguished success. It was from no want of due preparation or neglect to keep pace with its

growing requirements, certainly from no distaste to the profession of his choice, which he never forsook, that he found time for literary pursuits. He had his fair share of practice, and kept his clients by his faithfulness and skill, and he was too sensible to repine that those under more favorable conditions were more largely employed. He did his part wisely and well, but his mind was too active, his thirst for knowledge too keen for him to devote his attention exclusively to professional tasks. Our most successful lawyers have been almost equally eminent in other departments of learning; and history, to which Mr. Thornton devoted his leisure, is the handmaid of the law. Among his law books were many relics from other days, precious for the light they shed on legal principles which can never grow old, and of these he was a diligent student. But for our present purpose we dwell rather on his literary life than his professional.

What hold family history early gained over his mind may be measured by his zeal as one of the founders of the Historic, Genealogical Society in 1844. He was its first secretary, and after its REGISTER was established two years later, frequently contributed to its pages. As the others dropped successively off, he became the last of the original incorporators of the society. The pleasure he took in genealogy was not confined to dates or names, but his antiquarian and æsthetic tastes invested such subjects with a vivid reality as interesting as fiction and even more instructive than history itself. Of the Statistical, Prince and Antiquarian Societies he was a member, and of the two former a vice-president. In his controversial writings he was not always sufficiently guarded, and in the *Transcript*, to which he was a frequent contributor, are many of his essays, brilliant and full of information, which to the sensitive may have occasionally by their freedom and frankness given offence. It was a pity, for it made enemies of friends who would have largely added to his happiness.

In 1848 he married Miss Elizabeth Wallace, daughter of Stephen Jones Bowles, of Roxbury, now a part of Boston, of the lineage of Crocker, Heath, Eliot and Howland, one among her honored ancestors being the Rev. John Eliot himself, the apostle to the

Indians. His children were a son and three daughters; Henry, the former, being snatched away in the bloom of youth, a lad of high promise and the idol of his parents. This bereavement, which occurred not long before his own death, broke the heart of the father, whose pride and affection centered in the first born of his race for many generations, to whom he was devotedly attached.

With a home of his own at Brookline, and much to make it a happy one, he commenced the accumulation of books on his favorite subjects, and he knew well how to select. He early procured and carefully preserved the autographs of eminent personages, many of them our local or more world-wide celebrities. His object was rather to procure historical material than make a collection. His books were rare and precious, and they were especially dear to himself. They bore marks of the most careful reading in the many marginal notes in his peculiar and beautiful hand, and in the indices and on the blank leaves. Many were sent to him by friends of tastes like his own: as, for instance, Wingate's Britton, 1640, from Samuel Gardner Drake; a copy of John White's "Way to the Tree of Life," which had belonged to Gov. Simon Bradstreet, and bears his autograph, from George Livermore.

It was his special delight to hunt the shelves of Burnham's and other repositories of ancient books in out-of-the-way places, and he would emerge with treasure-trove to be carefully brushed and sent to the book-binder, then to be installed in a place of honor in his "New England Library." Among his most valued possessions of this sort were—"The Way of the Churches," 1645; "The Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven," 1644; "The Pouring out of the Seven Vials," 1645; all John Cotton's. An Increase Mather, the "First Principles of New England," 1675; a copy of Cicero which had belonged to John Cotton; Winthrop's "Short Story," 1644, constituted other priceless relics of the puritan age. This department of his library, of vigorous growth in other learning, garnered up the treasures he specially prized, till it reflected every phase of literary, religious and political life whilst under the crown.

To such a home, ever judiciously selected for its natural advantages, he must have turned, after his professional work was over, with grateful steps. His residence was latterly, since 1872, at Winthrop, by the salt water, such proximity to the ocean having ever been his preference, caught from the briny breath of the Atlantic near that of his early days. At Scarboro' he was always a welcome guest with his children, and there, as at his own abode, he was ever ready to yield to their frequent calls for a walk across the fields to the sea, with his pocket microscope in hand, ready for instant use on any curious bug or brilliant fungus, to be greeted by his enthusiastic exclamation of delight.

Even when worried or distressed, as all men are at times, the sight of the waves breaking on the shore after a storm, would exhilarate him till he forgot everything but the joy of living; and those who shared with him his sails about our own harbor, or in other places in the summer gloamings, or when the stars were shining, well remember his keen enjoyment. One special night, while gliding through the waters aflame with phosphorescent splendors trailing behind the boat or rushing tumultuously by its side, the scene affected him with an emotion testified in expressions that vividly impressed his companions. This sensibility to the unwonted revelations of nature, or to daily forms which never grow stale, became him none the less that he was strong in body and mind. They probably afforded richer zest, stirred depths in his nature more profound, for the health that characterized the one, the good sense which was the marked trait of the other.

Fond of the sea, his vacations were spent upon the New England coast, in his mind associated with the first plantations, all the incidents of which were familiar. Alone or with kindred spirits, he made frequent pilgrimages to these sacred shrines, and he always returned from them with renewed zeal for his antiquarian work. He travelled little to more distant points, the only exceptions being a brief tour in Europe, and two visits to the Lake Superior region, the first when recovering from a severe illness, and again in 1871, which was of longer duration.

Soon after his marriage in 1850, he published the "Lives of Eliot, Heath and Bowles," ancestors of his wife, followed by a genealogical memoir of the Gilbert family; and in 1851, "Mementos of the Swetts." In 1854 the "Landing at Cape Anne" was published. It was dedicated to his father. It describes with much animation the interesting incidents of a memorable episode in New England colonization. In 1864 he printed privately a pamphlet entitled "Peter Oliver's Puritan Commonwealth Reviewed," comprising a series of articles which first appeared in the *Transcript*. In 1857 he published "Ancient Pemaquid," written for the Maine Historical Society; in 1859, the "First Records of Anglo-American Colonization," and in 1867 the "Pulpit of the American Revolution," of which a second edition appeared in 1876.

He made several addresses on various occasions. Among the most memorable was one at the Popham Celebration in 1862, and one in 1870 before the New England Historic, Genealogical Society upon the two hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the signing of the compact in the cabin of the Mayflower, which, when published, had expanded into a volume of one hundred and five closely printed pages, perhaps the ablest, as it is the most elaborate, of his productions. He contemplated still farther enlarging it later, but deferred it until he should have finished his work on the Trelawney papers, which he left uncompleted at his death.

That his works were not more numerous has been attributed to his want of steadfastness of purpose, and that he abandoned many favorite literary projects, which if pursued with the same ardor that led to his undertaking them, would have redounded to his reputation and proved of value to the public. This is susceptible of a different explanation. Versed as he was in the masterpieces of literature, his modest estimate of his own powers led him to shrink from display. When prompted by his convictions to express them, he did his work conscientiously and well, but preferred to study the productions of other men rather than multiply his own. If less decided in his opinions, more tolerant of such as disagreed with them, he might have been more popular, but his character was marked and

peculiar, and we have no disposition to claim for him any credit he did not deserve. That by his literary pursuits he should have made for himself a happy existence independent of circumstances and the world around him, is a lesson too precious to be lost.

In 1872, being much worn in health, he took a three months' trip across the water, visiting Paris, but passing most of the time in England in the spots which had occupied his imagination for so many years, hallowed by the memory of the pilgrims, and to him the dwelling place of his progenitors. His journal for that time is full of enthusiasm, as he records "that he has worshipped where his people had worshipped, or trod the paths their feet had trod," though the concluding sentence of the journal is characteristic, expressing his satisfaction that he was an American boy.

It was during this visit that he became acquainted with the venerable Mr. Collins-Trelawny, and made arrangements to receive the family papers relating to the original settlement of Richmond's Island in Maine, by the agents of the Trelawnys of that day. They were sent to him for the Maine Historical Society, and forming a new link with the past, were a source of great delight to him. It was the work of editing these papers for the Maine Society which occupied the leisure of the last two years of his life, and which was interrupted by his long illness and its sad end. He had the satisfaction while in Ireland to meet face to face one with whom he had long corresponded and dearly loved, Mr. John P. Prendergast, whose position among historical writers is as eminent as among men for his generous nature and noble traits of character. In what estimation he was held by Mr. Prendergast appears from the contribution appended to this memoir. The subjects of one of his own latest literary notices in the periodical press, were the Cromwellian settlement of Ireland, and another work on the same country by the present writer.

We should not do justice to the memory of our lamented friend, if in closing this brief delineation of his character we made no allusion to the generosity which formed one of its sterling traits, and constituted so largely, too, its inspiration. No tale of distress ever failed

to touch his quick sympathy or receive at least in some small degree his help, so far as his moderate means permitted. He would take any amount of trouble to do a kindness, and his time, his influence, whatever information he possessed or could procure, were freely bestowed. His many friends of like pursuits will cheerfully bear witness to the alacrity and zeal with which he enlisted in their investigations, with what delicacy and consideration he gave his aid and counsel to their tasks. His books were at their service and his time without stint, and the ripe fruits of his own patient toil he yielded without reserve to make their labors a success. He was distinguished for that old-fashioned politeness and hospitality to strangers which constituted every citizen a host to entertain them. No matter how busily he was engaged, if not in some imperative duty, whenever any one came to his office with this sacred claim, he laid aside his book or work and gave the day with cheerfulness and eagerness to showing whatever in the city merited attention, helping in any inquiries that interested and rendering the visit one of pleasure and delight. Amongst his correspondence are found many notes of acknowledgment for these civilities, and with his taste for all that was memorable in the past or notable at the time, no stranger from abroad or from other portions of our own country could have had a better guide.

He seemed in full vigor, with promise of many years of health and strength when attacked by the disorder which after a few months illness proved fatal. Possibly with some premonition that life's fitful fever was approaching its termination, he went to Oak Hill in Scarboro', where his father five years before had ended his more protracted career. Here, where he had been so long a frequent guest and enjoyed many happy days, he died on the sixth of June, 1878. From its portals his remains were carried to Laurel Hill, a cemetery on the banks of the Saco, and placed by the side of his parents. There five generations, including his great-grandfather Col. Cutts, and his own son Henry, had been laid to their last sleep on earth.

Mr. Prendergast's Letter.

SANDYMOUNT, near Dublin,
22 February, 1879.

My dear Sir:

It was to my "Cromwellian Settlement in Ireland" that I owe my acquaintanceship with your worthy friend the late John Wingate Thornton.

You are aware of his genealogical tastes and pursuits. He was descended of the Winthrops, the Gookins, and the Downings; and for many years before 1865 he had been making searches and pushing inquiries in Europe for details of the two last named families.

In 1865 appeared the first edition of my "Cromwellian Settlement of Ireland." In this I had to draw largely from the works of Vincent Gookin, entitled, "The Great Case of Transplantation Discussed," published in 1655; and another in the same year, styled, "The Author and Case of Transplanting the Irish vindicated from the unjust Aspersions of Col. Lawrence," in which he defended himself from the attack of Col. Richard Lawrence, who charged him with too great tenderness for the Irish.

This brought me the following letter from Mr. Thornton:

BOSTON, MAY 29th, 1866.

John P. Prendergast, Esq.:

Dear Sir,—While examining your very thoroughly prepared account of the "Cromwellian Settlement of Ireland," I notice a name of much worth and fame in New England, and one very kindly treated in your pages, that of Gookin, of which I would gladly know more. I suppose the elder Vincent Gookin and his son Daniel Gookin, were sons of John Gokin or Gookin, of Ripple Court, Co. of Kent, England. Daniel Gookin, greatly interested in American colonization as early as 1621, took "out of Ireland" to Virginia a company of "fiftie" men, and in 1626 he appears to have been "of Carygoline in the County of Corke within the Kingdome of Ireland Esq^r," when John Thurlby, merchant, Thomas Coe and William Streets, mariners, and Richard Griffin, were his agents or attorneys.—His "lordshipp" or plantation in Virginia was "called Maries Mount." There is among my family papers the correspondence between Charles Gookin, governor of Pennsylvania, a grandson of Vincent Gookin, and Rev. Nathaniel Gookin of Massachusetts, a grandson of Daniel Gookin, in which letters they speak of their kindred. Nov. 28, 1709, Gov. Gookin writes: "By letters from Ireland I am informed two of our relatives are lately dead, viz. Robert Gookin, son of my uncle Robert, and Augustine Gookin, eldest son of my uncle Charles." In Thurloe's State Papers, IV. 6, 440, 449, V. 509, VI. 362, the name of Daniel Gookin appears. He was son of the Virginia colonist, and a prominent man in Massachusetts, and was born about 1612, but whether in Ireland or in England I have not learned. Now I would fain hope that in your researches for "The Cromwellian Settlement" your eye may have fallen on this name among the many records you have consulted, and that you may be able and willing to give me further facts about this family, as to *when* Vincent and Daniel returned to Ireland, and to what place, and about their settlement there; especially I would like to know what records there may be of births, baptisms, marriages, deaths or burials.

Long years I have sought for Vincent's books quoted by you, but without success. Do they contain any allusion to family or personal history?

A reply will greatly oblige

Yours very respectfully,

J. WINGATE THORNTON.

I was enabled to supply much information about the Gookins, and as my son and only child Francis Ensor Prendergast was embarking to settle in the United States in the month of November, 1866, I sent out the matter I had collected by him, and received from Mr. Thornton the following warm acknowledgment.

20 COURT ST., BOSTON, U. S.
November 13th, 1866.

John P. Prendergast, Esq.:

My dear Sir,—I hardly know how adequately to express my grateful appreciation of your generous reply to my inquiry about the Gookins, an inquiry prompted by your *thorough* volumes, the "Cromwellian Settlement." Allow me to say that your kindness was greatly enhanced by coming through the hands of your accomplished son, whom I cordially welcome. It will be my pleasure as well as my duty to show him what kindness I may be able to tender, but he will make friends for himself everywhere. Your exact quotation from the Longford Survey of 1620, that Daniel Gookin's 500 acres "*is* sold to Mr. Edgeworth," corrects "Notes and Queries" 1853, pp. 238, 239, that his estate passed to Edgeworth *after* 1620. The "33 undertakers" of Longford may have been of those alluded to in your "Cromwellian Settlement," lxxi. lxxii. * * * Your obliged friend,

J. WINGATE THORNTON.

[The omitted portions of the letter, which is a long one, contain facts and suggestions relative to the Gookin family. They show a wide range of reading and keenness in detecting genealogical hints. Some of the facts will be found in Mr. Thornton's contributions to the REGISTER.]

I subsequently ascertained that Daniel Gookin and Sir Vincent Gookin respectively third and fourth sons of John Gookin of Ripple Court in the County of Kent, settled as planters in Ireland in the end of Queen Elizabeth's reign, or beginning of King James the 1st (1590–1615), Daniel in the County of Longford, and Sir Vincent near Bandon, in the County of Cork.

Daniel sold his allotment in Longford to Mr. Edgeworth, ancestor of Maria Edgeworth, our celebrated writer of Irish tales; and by him or one of his descendants it was named "Edgeworthstown," and continues to this day in the Edgeworth family. Daniel Gookin subsequently purchased lands near Carrigaline in the County of Cork, and from thence proceeded to settle in Virginia. But he returned to Carrigaline to obtain cows to stock the lands of him and his fellow colonists in America, and I have a lively recollection of the pleasure Mr. Thornton experienced when I showed him a suit in chancery here in 1634, wherein Daniel Gookin obtained a decree against one Power for not supplying him with cows for this purpose, according to his contract,

Concerning the Downings, also, I was fortunately able to collect much intelligence very gratifying to him. And I cannot help sending you a memorandum concerning that branch of his family for its intrinsic value. It may be long before any one with his grasp of the subject may rise to enlighten posterity with the vast stores he must have collected. [The memorandum of Mr. Thornton contains extracts from Gov. Winthrop's letters

in 1622 and 1623 to his son John, then at Dublin, showing that Emanuel Downing then resided in the vicinity of Dublin; also other facts about the Downings.]

Mr. Thornton and I being thus for some years known to each other by correspondence of letters, I was greatly gratified in the year 1872 to make his acquaintance in the flesh. He visited me here—alas, for too short a time!—a couple of days at most. His kindness to my son would have made him most acceptable; but who could meet so frank, so cordial, so well instructed a man and not enjoy his society? From Dublin he proceeded to visit those parts of Ireland where Daniel and Vincent Gookin had settled. First, he went to Carrigaline, "Sniffed the air that Daniel had breathed," surveyed the neighborhood where he had dwelt, and wrote me a letter full of all these details, now I regret to say lost. Thence he went to Bandon, where Sir Vincent Gookin and his descendants had settled, and there I had the pleasure of introducing him to Mr. Bennett, the historian of Bandon, who was full to overflowing of the Gookin history and pedigree.

He did not return to Dublin from Cork, and thus I had not the pleasure of seeing him again. His death came to me as a sudden and unexpected blow.

He had always looked forward as the work of his later, his leisure years, to putting together his family history. I believe few works of the kind would have surpassed it in interest, as it would have been treated by him.

Now, alas! it may be long, as I have already said, ere any one competent to the task may be found. Yours, my dear Sir,

Most affectionately,

Thomas C. Amory. JOHN P. PRENDERGAST.

WORKS OF MR. THORNTON.

From Allibone's "Dictionary of Authors."

1. Genealogical Memoir of the Gilbert Family in both Old and New England. Boston, 1850. 8vo. pp. 23. Privately printed: 50 copies.

2. Lives of Isaac Heath and John Bowles, &c., and of Rev. John Eliot, Jr., *s. a., sed* Roxbury, MDCCCL. 12mo. pp. 216. Privately printed: 50 copies.

3. Mementos of the Swett Family: in Memoriam. Roxbury, Dec. 1851. 8vo. pp. 26. Privately printed: 100 copies.

"The author is one of the best-informed antiquaries of New England, and it is to be hoped that he will soon permit the public to see the History of Massachusetts, on which he has so long been employed. As a genealogist his name will be found in several places on our list [pp. 73, 74, 81, 180, 181, 234]; he was one of the founders of the N. E. [Hist.] Gen. Society, and an early contributor to the Register."—WILLIAM H. WHITMORE: *Hand-Book of Amer. Genealogy*, Albany, 1862, 4to., 81. See, also, Hist. Mag., N. York, 1862, 43, 328.

4. The Landing at Cape Anne; or, The Charter of the First Permanent Colony on the Territory of the Massachusetts Company; now Discovered and first Published from the Original Manuscript; with an Inquiry into its

Authority, and a History of the Colony, 1624–1628: Roger Conant, Governor. Boston, 1854 (some 1855). 8vo. pp. xii. 84.

"The history . . . is given with great learning and ingenuity."—EDWARD EVERETT: *Orations and Speeches*, iii. 308, n.

See, also, N. Amer. Rev., lxxx. 260 (by A. P. Peabody, D.D.), and Lon. Athen., 1855, 549. It was highly commended by the venerable Josiah Quincy.

5. Ancient Pemaquid: an Historical Review: Prepared at the Request of the Maine Historical Society for its Collections [*vide* vol. 5, 1857]. Portland, 1857. 8vo. pp. 168. Privately printed.

"Mr. Thornton has shown all his wonted acuteness and industry in this work."—*N. Amer. Rev.*, lxxxvi. 295 (*q. v.*).

"A very interesting narrative."—*Hist. Mag.*, 1857, 320.

6. The First Records of Anglo-American Colonization; their History. Boston, 1859. 8vo. pp. 12. Privately printed: 250 copies.

[This was first published in the Historical Magazine for February, 1858 (edited by John Ward Dean), pp. 33–5, under the title of "The Records of the London Company for the First Colony in Virginia."]

See Hist. Mag., 1858, 33; 1859, 226, and 1860, 81.

7. The Pulpit of the American Revolution; or, the Political Sermons of the Period of 1776; with a Historical Introduction, Notes, and Illustrations. 1860. 12mo. pp. xxxviii. 537.

Commended by N. Englander, Jan. 1861 (L. Bacon, D.D.); Chris. Exam., Jan. 1861; Bibl. Sacra, April, 1861 (Prof. Parks); N. Amer. Rev., April, 1861 (A. P. Peabody, D.D.); Atlantic Monthly, May, 1861 (E. P. Whipple); Lit. Chron. and Advert., Dec. 1861 (Rev. Henry Giles); Bost. Eve. Transcript, Nov. 2, 1867 (C. W. Upham); commended, with qualification, by Hist. Mag., Sept. 1861; censured, without qualification, by Amer. Church Quarterly, April, 1861 (T. W. Coit, D.D.).

8. Colonial Schemes of Popham and Gorges: Speech at the Fort Popham Celebration, August, 29, 1862, under the Auspices of the Maine Historical Society. 1863. r. 8vo. pp. 20.

"I was astonished at the accumulation of authorities . . . with such wonderful diligence collected."—EMORY WASHBURN.

See, also, N. Amer. Rev., July, 1863, 288 (by A. P. Peabody).

Contributions to the Historical Magazine and other periodicals.

[I add the following works omitted by Dr. Allibone, or issued since the publication of his "Dictionary of Authors":—

9. Peter Oliver's "Puritan Commonwealth" Reviewed. Boston, 1857. 8vo. pp. 79. Privately printed: 100 copies.

This is a reprint of seventeen articles which were first printed in the Boston Evening Transcript, Dec. 20, 1856; Jan. 2, 8, 13, 22, 23, 24, 29; Feb. 5, 9, 11, 18, 19, 21, 26; March 4, 19, 25; April 2, 9, 1857.

Noticed in the Historical Magazine, vol. ii. p. 286.

10. D'Amerie, Emery, Amory. Reprinted from the N. E. Hist. and Gen. Register, for October, 1869. Boston, 1869. 8vo. pp. 6.

See Whitmore's "American Genealogist," 3d ed. p. 258.

11. The Historical Relation of New England to the English Commonwealth. [Boston] 1874. 8vo. pp. 105.

This work was prepared as an address and delivered before the New England Historic, Genealogical Society, Nov. 21, 1870, at the quarter-millenial celebration of Signing the Compact on board the Mayflower, and the first landing of the Pilgrims on the shores of New England. After being much enlarged, it was printed in the "Congregational Quarterly" for April, July and October, 1874. The same type, was used to print it in book-form. Commended by the N. E. Hist. and Gen. Register, xxix. 336.

It is a grand subject and most admirably handled, fortified at every step, and carrying complete conviction. Mighty as the influence of America over the intellect, institutions and fortunes of the old world has been, and still mightier as they are destined to be in the perpetual future, your pages demonstrate that, from the beginning, that influence has been potent in awakening thought, opening the way to political truth and moulding events in modern history.—Rev. CHARLES W. UPHAM.

Thanks for your very interesting and original book. I have more than *read*, I have *studied* it with fresh interest and instruction each time of repeated perusal. 'Twas a pious labor and has been well done.—WENDELL PHILLIPS.

You have rendered an important service to history by this gathering of wonderful material, as incidental to the unfolding thought, and your great idea will certainly weave itself in as one of the threads that make up the firm fabric of philosophic history.—Hon. EDWIN WRIGHT.

It covers ground which is occupied, in the same dimensions, by no other historical work within my knowledge, and your monograph indicates equally thorough research, clear exhibition and rare constructive power.—Rev. ANDREW P. PEABODY, D.D., LL.D.

It draws from so many sources of knowledge and presents the topic in so clear a light, that every one who reads it must be stimulated and profited.—Rev. ALVAH HOVEY, D.D.

It is marked by the fulness of research and acuteness that mark your historical contributions.—Hon. RICHARD FROTHINGHAM, LL.D.

The work displays great pains and research and is a most valuable contribution to the history of American and English freedom.—Hon. GEORGE LUNT.

You have touched a theme which is new and with a fulness and force that are very impressive and persuasive; and at a time also when you will find ready and receptive minds.—GEORGE WM. CURTIS, LL.D.

It bears the marks of great industry, for the author must have consulted several hundred books, pamphlets and manuscripts, to most of which he refers and many of which he cites; and his results are of great interest to the English race on both sides of the ocean.—Hon. ELIAS HASKET DERBY.

12. In Memoriam. James Brown Thornton. 1794–1873. [Boston, 1877.] Sq. 16mo. pp. 8.

This is a memoir of Mr. Thornton's father, reprinted, with additions, from the Historical and Genealogical Register for July, 1877.

In addition to these works, the following tabular pedigrees by Mr. Thornton have been printed:—

13. Thornton, 1845.
14. Gilbert, Wells, Thornton and Belcher, 1850.
15. Bowles, 1854.

Besides the biographical sketch in the "Dictionary of Authors," from which this list is copied, other sketches will be found in Drake's "Dictionary of American Biography," p. 907; and in Duyckinck's "Cyclopædia of American Literature," 2d ed. 1866, Supplement, p. 131; 3d ed. 1875, vol. ii. p. 701.]